IN THE CLAIMS:

Please **cancel claims 3, 5-15, 17-20, 22, and 24-30** without prejudice or disclaimer, and **amend claims 1, 2, 4, 16, 21, 23, and 31** as follows:

1. (*Currently amended*) A shopping assistance method, comprising the following steps carried out by a service system:

   - receiving a shopping enquiry from a remote enquirer;

   - obtaining the geographic location of the enquiry;

   - attributing [[a]] an enquirer-independent functional significance to the enquiry location ~~through a database lookup~~ by carrying out a first location-dependent database search;

   - determining a geographical search parameter by using the enquirer-independent functional significance of the enquiry location;

   - ~~carrying out a search to find~~ finding an answer to the shopping enquiry by carrying out a second location-dependent database search, the second search being carried out by using the ~~enquiry-location significance~~ geographical search parameter;

   - ~~to control~~ controlling the geographical coverage of the search by using the geographical search; and

   - ~~directly or indirectly~~ returning the search results to the enquirer.

2. (*Currently amended*) A method according to claim **1**, wherein the geographical ~~enquiry-location significance is used to control the~~

~~coverage of the search by being used to set one or more of the~~ ~~following as a~~ search parameter specifies at least one of the following:

    ~~- particular trading premises;~~

    - a particular shopping zone;

    - a predetermined geographic area for the search;

    - a geographic range for the search;

    - one or more geographic foci for the search.

3. (*Cancelled*)

4. (*Currently amended*) A method according to claim [[3]] 1, wherein the first location-dependent database search ~~step of attributing a significance to the enquiry involves~~ includes checking a database of traders and their locations.

5-15. (*Cancelled*)

16. (*Currently amended*) A method according to claim 1, wherein the service system has a database of local traders giving their locations and contact details of their on-line database systems, the second location-dependent search ~~involving~~ including consulting the database of local traders and then contacting the on-line database systems of the traders determined as being within the geographical coverage set for the search and trading in items at least of the general type relevant to the enquiry.

17-20. (*Cancelled*)

21. (*Currently amended*) A shopping-assistance service system, comprising:

- an input subsystem for receiving a shopping enquiry from a remote enquirer;

- a location subsystem for determining the geographic location of the enquiry;

- a <u>first</u> database subsystem for <u>carrying out a first location-dependent search to</u> attribut~~ing~~<u>e</u> a<u>n</u> enquirer-independent functional significance to the enquiry location ~~through a database lookup~~;

- a <u>second database</u> ~~search~~ subsystem for carrying out a <u>second location-dependent</u> search to find an answer to the shopping enquiry using the <u>enquirer-independent functional</u> ~~enquiry-location~~ significance to control the <u>geographical</u> coverage of the search; and

- an output subsystem for directly or indirectly returning the search results to the enquirer.

22. (*Cancelled*)

23. (*Currently amended*) A system according to claim [[22]] <u>21</u>, wherein the <u>first</u> database subsystem comprises a database of traders and their locations~~, the step of attributing a significance to the enquiry involving effecting a lookup in the trader database~~.

24-30. (*Cancelled*)

31. (*Currently amended*) A system according to claim **21,** wherein the <u>second database subsystem comprises</u> ~~service system has~~ a database of local traders ~~giving~~ <u>including their location and</u> contact details of their on-line database systems, the search subsystem being ~~operative~~ <u>arranged</u> to consult the database of local traders and then contact the on-line database systems of the traders that are determined as being within the <u>geographical</u> coverage set for the search and trading in items at least of the general type relevant to the enquiry.